

Date Submitted:

## PROPOSED CODE AMENDMENT

Note: The Board of County Commissioners relies on the information provided in this form when deciding to docket the proposed code amendment.
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1. **What is the issue/problem/opportunity to be addressed? What problems are County residents or other parties having with the current regulations?** (Provide a specific example, if possible.):

Cascades Camp and Conference Center is regulated under Thurston County Code as a “resort and retreat facility.” Current zoning regulations for resorts and retreat facilities within the RRR 1/5 zoning district have a very small threshold for (1) building size, and (2) total building coverage. TCC 20.54.070(34.3). These restrictions are preventing resorts and retreat facilities from providing a normal range of services and amenities. This proposal represents an opportunity to establish standards that will enable such facilities to offer the full range of standard services, while also eliminating the nonconforming status of all the resorts and retreat facilities in Thurston County that already exceed the current thresholds.

Specifically, at TCC 20.54.070(34.3), “Resorts and Retreat Facilities,” the County Code restricts the total square footage of buildings within each resort or retreat facility to 20,000 square feet, and the maximum building size to 4,500 square feet. All of the existing camps in the County have buildings that were constructed prior to and exceed the 20,000 square foot limitation or they exceed the maximum building size currently in place, or both. This makes them nonconforming and limits their ability to construct new buildings or enhance existing offerings.

Exhibit A attached shows the location of existing resorts and retreat facilities in unincorporated Thurston County. Although the applicant is Cascades Camp and Conference Center in southeast Thurston County, the text amendment would pertain to any resorts and retreat facilities in Thurston County over 100 acres.

Thurston County has the benefit of a number of facilities serving a wide range of uses from horse enthusiasts to Boy Scouts and church groups. Current regulations address facilities five to ten acres in size and facilities over ten acres. However, these facilities in Thurston County vary widely in size, and more specific regulations are needed to address large-acreage facilities which generally have more users and therefore need more buildings to support their activities.

Resorts and retreat facilities provide a wide range of special sessions for all types of interests, and the use of these facilities for retreat locations is on the rise. When the facilities were originally constructed, they were generally a good distance away from the urban areas, but some are now located within a short drive from cities, where they are in demand for business retreats or other similar events. The facilities are now used year-round, and buildings are needed for retreat and additional indoor activities offered by the facilities.

The existing facilities provide a natural environment away from the distractions of the city and everyday living. Benefits for children and youth have been well documented. Through the experience, children

develop their social skills, build character, develop self-respect, and learn community living and service skills. For adults, a retreat can be time for reflection and rejuvenation. Business groups also seek the benefits of a retreat setting, where participants can focus on goals and objectives in a natural setting away from day-to-day distractions.

The demand for resort and retreat facilities is growing, and allowing existing facilities to expand to meet this demand will serve the public as a whole. With the current restriction on size of buildings and maximum building coverage, they are unable to meet any increased demand for resort and retreat locations in Thurston County.

Cascades Campground and Conference Center is located on 820 acres, comprised of 12 parcels in contiguous ownership. The current Special Use Permit standard limiting total building coverage to 20,000 square feet means that this facility is currently limited to .00055 – or 5 tenths of one percent – building coverage. Amending the development code to accommodate larger facilities will avoid the consequences of the current arbitrary “one size fits all” standard.

Amending the development regulations to expand the maximum building size and cumulative building footprint would allow Cascades Campground and Conference Center to provide the facilities and services it originally envisioned when the first Site Plan for this facility was approved in 1987 (SPR 9-87). Under the original Site Plan approval it was envisioned that full development of this site would use approximately 8.5 acres for buildings and parking (October 5, 1987 Staff Report to Hearings Examiner, p.2). The current standard represents less than 1/16<sup>th</sup> of the allowable building coverage that was envisioned and approved on the original Site Plan. Subsequent to the expiration of the 1987 Site Plan, the zoning (rezoned from “Unmapped Use” to RRR 1/5) and Special Use regulations pertaining to this facility were amended, rendering the existing buildings nonconforming, and making future development of the facility impossible without obtaining a variance to the current regulations.

Approving this requested Development Code Amendment would remedy the nonconforming status of all the resorts and retreat facilities in Thurston County, while allowing for some limited, normal growth and expansion.

This proposed development code amendment is logical because it would provide for a two-tiered approach to maximum building size and footprint that is based on the acreage of the resort or retreat facility. The current threshold of 4,500 square feet for maximum building size and 6,000 square feet for maximum building coverage for parcels up to 10 acres in size would still apply. However, for parcels larger than 100 acres, the maximum building sizes and footprints would increase proportional to the size of the resort or retreat center, up to a maximum of 200,000 square feet.

**2. Are you aware of anyone else (individual or group) who shares this concern? If yes, who? How many? (Please provide contact information, if possible.)**

Current rules render all of the resorts and retreat facilities listed below non-conforming either because they contain building(s) exceeding the maximum size permitted, or by exceeding the maximum building coverage.

Name of Camp	Parcel #	Size in Acres	Total Square Feet of Structures	Largest Structure on Parcel (SF)
<b>Camp Solomon Schlechter</b> [annexed in 2016 but previously located in Tumwater UGA] <sup>1</sup>	12712110000	98.33	840	840
	12712210100	19.91	8,112	3,480
	12712210200	19.98	20,487	3,154
	<b>Total 138.22</b>		<b>29,439</b>	
<b>Black Lake Bible Camp [located in Tumwater UGA]<sup>2</sup></b>	12705240201	19.54	4,012	1,792
	12706410100	1.42	864	864
	12706410101	0.96	13,997	11,405
	12706410102	1.00	0	0
	12706410103	1.00	0	0
	12706410104	1.00	0	0
	12706410200	3.64	6,396	1,224
	12706141200	14.54	72,364	11,648
	<b>Total 43.07</b>		<b>117,194</b>	
<b>Camp Thunderbird</b>	1481312000	125.93	23,279	4,440
<b>Total 125.93</b>			<b>23,279</b>	
<b>Chastain Mist Camp</b>	11805210100	7.0	240	240
	11932340600	17.5	9,634	5,042
<b>Total 24.5</b>			<b>9,874</b>	
<b>Cascades Camp &amp; Conference Center <sup>3</sup></b>	23630130100	40.00	0	2,016
	23630300200	46.75	0	0
	23629000000	83.18	0	0
	23629110000	304.00	0	0
	23629120000	38.74	0	0
	23629330000	160.79	91,608	13,184
	23630130207	7.56	1,269	1,269
	23630130208	6.17	2,864	2,864
	23630130209	6.28	0	0
	23632310000	124.6	0	0
	23628330000	1.68	0	0
	<b>Total 819.75</b>		<b>95,741</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Two of the facilities in the preceding table (Camp Solomon Schlechter and Black Lake Bible Camp) are located within the Tumwater UGA or City and therefore are not restricted by the size limits in the County Code; however, they are included in this list to illustrate that none of the camps in the County would be a conforming use under current County codes.

<sup>2</sup> See prior footnote.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Cascades Camp & Conference Center

The table indicates that there are presently three resort and retreat facilities in Thurston County that are non-conforming and are unable to build additional structures because of this restriction. Current zoning restricts the total square footage of buildings supporting Resort and Retreat Facilities to 20,000 square feet. All of the camps are currently non-conforming due to the number of buildings that were constructed prior to the 20,000 square foot limitation, and most have buildings larger than 4,500 square feet. The facilities' legal non-conforming status is not desirable since they are unable to expand to increase their services.

Contact information is listed below.

Cascades Camp & Conference Center  
Rob Mohrweis  
Executive Director  
22825 Peissner Road SE  
Yelm, WA. 98597  
360-894-3838 Office  
360-894-2373 Fax  
[robmohrweis@cascadescamp.org](mailto:robmohrweis@cascadescamp.org)

Dan Collett, Ranger and Properties Superintendent  
Camp Thunderbird  
11740 Summit Lake Road NW  
Olympia, WA 98502  
253-682-2217  
[daniel.collett@scouting.org](mailto:daniel.collett@scouting.org)

Chastain Mist Equestrian Camps  
P O Box 3262, Lacey, WA 98509  
3728 South Bay Road, Olympia, WA 98506  
360.780.0808  
[ChastainMist@gmail.com](mailto:ChastainMist@gmail.com)

**3. What do you think needs to be changed, added, or deleted in the code?** (Please cite the section of code you want changed or attach the affected code with the proposed changes.)  
The proposed text amendment is to Thurston County Code Chapter 20.54 Special Use as follows.  
(Proposed language is underlined.)

20.54.070 – Use – Specific Standards

34.3 A. Resorts and Retreat Facilities less than 100 acres in size

- a. Maximum building coverage shall be six thousand (6,000) square feet on parcels between five and ten acres. Maximum building coverage shall be twenty thousand square feet on parcels larger than ten acres.
- b. No individual building shall be larger than four thousand five hundred (4,500) square feet.
- c. Minimum lot size: five acres.

- d. All structures and parking areas shall be set back from adjacent residential properties a minimum of one hundred feet. The one hundred foot setback shall include sight-obscuring plantings.

**B. Resorts and Retreat Facilities over 100 acres in size**

- a. One hundred thousand (100,000) square feet of building area is allowed for the first 100 acres of site area. For every 100 acres of additional site area, an additional ten thousand (10,000) square feet of building area is allowed. Maximum building coverage shall be two hundred thousand (200,000) square feet.
- b. No individual building shall be larger than thirty-five thousand (35,000) square feet.
- c. All structures and parking areas shall be set back from adjacent residential properties a minimum of one hundred feet. The one hundred foot setback shall include sight-obscuring plantings.

**4. Where would the amendment apply?**

- ☐ County-wide      ☒ Rural County
- ☐ Urban Growth Area. Please check the applicable urban growth area:
- |                                   |                                      |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Olympia  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yelm        | <input type="checkbox"/> Rainier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacey    | <input type="checkbox"/> Grand Mound |                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tumwater | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenino      |                                  |

**Site address, if applicable:** Not Applicable

**Who initiated the request**    ☐ Staff    ☒ Citizen    ☐ Planning Partner    ☐ Board

**Contact Information: name/email/telephone number:**

Rob Mohrweis, Executive Director  
Cascades Camp and Conference Center  
22825 Peissner Road SE  
Yelm, WA. 98597  
360-894-3838 Office 360-894-2373 Fax

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Christina Chaput at christina.chaput@co.thurston.wa.us